

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-05 SAB-01 SAM-01 EB-07

SAJ-01 OMB-01 AID-05 IO-11 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /101 W

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R 121811Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6446

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 02474

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MILI, GW, SA

SUBJECT: FRG ARMS SALES: "MARDERS" FOR SAUDI ARABIA?

REF: BONN 1602 DTG 291730Z JAN 76

1. SINCE LAST YEAR AN APPLICATION HAS BEEN PENDING WITH THE FRG FOR THE PURCHASE OF 600 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS OF THE "MARDER" TYPE BY SAUDI ARABIA. NEWS-PAPER REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE SAUDIS ARE WILLING TO PAY D-MARK 1.6 MILLION PER UNIT. THE GERMAN MANUFACTURER, RHEINSTAHL, HAS NOT YET HAD ITS FORMAL APPLICATION FOR EXPORT AUTHORIZATION ACTED UPON.

2. SINCE THE VISIT OF SAUDI ARABIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD IBN FAISAL TO BONN IN JANUARY, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH NEWSPAPER SPECULATION REGARDING WHETHER THE FRG WILL DECIDE IN FAVOR OF RHEINSTAHL'S APPLICATION. SOME JOURNALISTS HAVE ALLEGED THAT THE FRG WILL REDEFINE ITS
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"AREAS OF TENSION" INTO "DIRECT" AND "INDIRECT" AREAS.

THUS, "DIRECT" AREAS OF TENSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD ENCOMPASS THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH BORDER DIRECTLY ON ISRAEL. SAUDI ARABIA, QUALIFYING AS AN "INDIRECT" STATE, WOULD PRESUMABLY BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE GERMAN ARMS.

3. STATEMENTS BY SENIOR FRG OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT THE FRG WILL NOT APPROVE THE EXPORT APPLICATION. PARLIAMENTARY STATE SECRETARIES MOERSCH AND GRUENER OF THE FOREIGN AND ECONOMIC MINISTRIES, RESPECTIVELY, BOTH REAFFIRMED THE STRICT FRG POLICY AGAINST ARMS EXPORTS TO AREAS OF TENSION. GRUENER STATED FURTHER THAT, MUCH AS HE FAVORED EXPORTS FOR DOMESTIC ECONOMIC REASONS, IN THE CASE OF THE "MARDERS" FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS WERE OVERRIDING. A FONOFF SOURCE ALSO EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT HE WOULD BE SURPRISED IF THE FRG WERE TO GRANT THE EXPORT LICENSE. HE INDICATED FURTHER THAT TO THE BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE THERE WAS NO PLAN FOR A MEETING OF THE FEDERAL SECURITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE APPLICATION.

4. COMMENT: IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THE FRG WILL AGREE TO EXPORT "MARDERS" TO SAUDI ARABIA. FAISAL'S STATEMENT IN BONN THAT THE "MARDERS" WERE FOR DEFENSE AGAINST ISRAEL (REFTEL) WAS CERTAINLY NOT HELPFUL TO THE SAUDI CASE. MOREOVER, WE FEEL THAT THE CURRENT REVELATIONS IN THE LOCKHEED CASE WILL ADD TO THE GENERAL DISTASTE OF THE FRG TO PROMOTE THE SALE OF GERMAN ARMS ABROAD AT THIS TIME.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY SALES, MILITARY VEHICLES, EXPORT CONTROLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BONN02474
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760054-0934
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760257/aaaabxkn.tel
Line Count: 91
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BONN 1602
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JAN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JAN 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <03 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRG ARMS SALES: "MARDERS" FOR SAUDI ARABIA?
TAGS: MASS, MILI, GE, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006